



Love *of* Allāh



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## The Love of Allāh



Allāh says in the Last Testament,  
Qur'ān al-Furqān,  
the Book that distinguishes Truth from falsehood,

فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَ يُحِبُّونَهُ

FASAWFA YATĪ-LLAHU BI-QAWMIŪ-  
YUḤIBBUHUM WA YUḤIBBŪNAH

*Allāh will bring a people whom He loves  
and who love Him*

(5:54)

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Virginia

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ  
 مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا  
 يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ  
 وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

WA MINA-N-NĀSI  
 MAÑY YATTAKḥIDḥU MIN DŪNI-LLAHI ʾANDĀDĀ  
 YUḤIBŪNNAHUM KAḤUBI-LLAH  
 WA-L-LADḥINA ʾĀĀMANŪŪ  
 ʾASHḥADDU ḤUBBAL-LI-LLĀH

*And among the people  
 there are those who take others than Allāh to love;  
 loving them as they would love Allāh.  
 But those who are safe in belief  
 love Allāh more ardently.*

(2:165)

**“Nothing in the universe can contain Me  
 save the heart of the believer.”**

from the sacred sayings (*ḥadīth qudsi*) of Allāh  
 on the tongue of the prophet  
 (blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him)

**“I am with the one whose heart is broken for My sake.”**

from the sacred sayings (*ḥadīth qudsi*) of Allāh  
 on the tongue of the prophet  
 (blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him)

In al-Qurʾān,  
Allāh distinguishes between those He does *not* love



“Allāh does not love the aggressors”  
(2:190)

“Allāh does not love corruption”  
(2:205)

“Allāh does not love the ungrateful”  
(2:276)

“Allāh does not love those who hide the Truth”  
(3:32)

“Allāh does not love the oppressors”  
(3:140)

“Allāh does not love the proud and boastful”  
(4:36)

“Allāh does not love the traitors”  
(4:107)

“Allāh does not love those who corrupt”  
(5:64)

“Allāh does not love the transgressors”  
(5:87)

“Allāh does not love the prodigal and profligate.”  
(6:141)

“Allāh does not love the treacherous”  
(8:58)

“Allāh does not love those that exult”  
(28:76)

“He does not love the unbelievers”  
(30:45)



and those whom He does love:



“Allāh loves those who work goodness”  
(2:195)

“Allāh loves those who turn in repentance”  
(2:222)

“Allāh loves those who fear Him”  
(3:76)

“Allāh loves those who are patient”  
(3:146)

“Allāh loves those who are just”  
(5:42)

“Allāh loves those who purify themselves”  
(9:108)

“Allāh loves the just”  
(49:9)

“Allāh loves those who struggle in His Way”  
(61:4)



In all the above cases the word in Arabic that is used is derived from the root Ḥ<sup>a</sup> B<sup>a</sup> B<sup>a</sup> which means: love, affection, effacement. It also means to seed. Implicit within that meaning is the development of the seed into a mature plant. Those who have deeply concerned themselves with the clarification and definition of the degrees and levels of this ‘love’ through direct experience have enumerated certain distinct and precise phases in the progression from affection to that annihilation of which ash-Shiblī, Allāh sanctify his secret, said:

“Love is a fire,  
which once kindled in the heart,  
consumes everything  
but the Beloved”

or

“Love arrived and turned me outside in  
burnt, burning and all burnt out.  
What’s left of my life?  
— Ashes —”



for as Allāh says,

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ○  
وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ ○  
فَبَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبُّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ○

KULLUM MAN ‘ALAYHĀ FĀN ○  
WA YABĀQĀ WAJHU RABBIKA  
DhÛ-L-JALĀLI WA-L-’IKRAM ○  
FABPAYYĪ’ALĀĀ’I RABBIKUMĀ TUKADhDhIBĀN ○

*Everything upon it shall perish  
and all that remains is the Presence of your Lord,  
Majestic and Benevolent.*

*Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?*

(55:26-28)



# The Stages of Love

## Ḥa Ba Ba

ʾittifāq	compatibility	إتفاق
ʾitilāf	intimacy or concord	انتلاف
taʿalluq	attachment	تعلق
laṭāfah	tenderness	لطفة
ʾishṭiyāq	ardour	إشتياق
hawa	passion	هوى
shaghḥif	ravishment	شغف
ḥāʾir	utter bewilderment	حائر
wajd	ecstasy	وجد
jinnah	madness	جنة
taʿbīd	enslavement	تعبيد
maḥabbah	effacement	محبة
fanāʾ	perishing or annihilation	فناء
wiṣāl	communion	وصال
baqāʾ	permanence or eternal life	بقاء

Each of these stages has in turn been divided and precisely delineated by the graphers and tracers of the ravished and broken hearted into minute subdivisions of refined meaning as a result of their own ecstatic joyful sufferings on the way to Allāh. Each appears to be a shoreless sea and yet each in turn is engulfed in a greater ocean and yet each ocean is but a single tear on the cheek of the lover.

“and if you look closely you can see the tracks of my tears”



## compatibility or ʿittifāq

ʿIttifāq has its roots in *wafiqa* which has numerous levels of meaning in Arabic. At the most outer level it means suitable, fit, consistent, proper. The next layer in yields meaning along the lines of reconciliation, bring into agreement, make peace between, harmonize, balance; at another level of meaning, there are shades of agreement, consent, confirmation and approval and still deeper within is the understanding that success or assistance or prosperity is a result of the favor of Allāh. This is the underlying basis and foundation upon which all the stages of Love rest.

It appears as such in two forms within the Qurʾān. In the first instance it appears in Sūrah ‘Women’ in the context of settling disputes between men and women: *“And if you fear a breach between the two then appoint a wise one (ḥakaman) from among his family and a wise one from among hers. If they desire reconciliation Allāh will make them of one mind (yuwaffiqi) for truly Allāh is all-Knowing, Aware.”* (4:35). It appears in another instance where the people of Madyan are berating the Prophet Shuʿayb, peace be upon him, who has been sent to them by Allāh to reform them and reconcile them to the Way of Allāh and he replies to them saying, *“Oh my people. Do you think if I am acting on clear proof from my Lord and He is providing me with ample sustenance that I*

*would go behind your backs doing that which I ask you not to do? I desire nothing but to reconcile you (to Allāh) as far as I am able. My success in mediation (tawfiqī) is only with Allāh. Upon Him do I depend and unto Him do I turn.* ” (11:88)

Thus all of the bright etheric and shining esoteric personalities among the *Mutaṣawwiffah* (‘Ṣūfīs’) held that the very first step in the path of Love of Allāh was the self attaining to the stage (*maqām*) of compatibility (ʿittifāq) which meant bringing the self {*nafs*} into accord (*wifāq*) with the Way set out by Allāh and to harmonize (*tawfiq*) the self with what is Written. Only through doing this could one hope to set out on a path that held the promise of success and congruence (*tawāfuq*) in the end. Further the Ṣūfīs held, as in truth do all orthopractic Muslims, that the perfect and only means of reaching this stage was conformity (*wifāq*) to, and adoption (*tawfiq*) of, the Divinely Revealed Law (*aṣḥ-ṣḥarīʿah*) as demonstrated in practice (*sunnah*) by the Last Prophet and Seal of the Messengers, Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him.

The basis of the Way is witnessing (*shahadatayn*) the Reality that there is no deity other than Allāh; that Muḥammad is his messenger. Each wayfarer accepts that worship {*ṣalah*} at five clearly prescribed times daily is incumbent on all free adult sane healthy human beings as is the fasting (*ṣawm*) from dawn to sunset during the holy month of Ramaḍān every year and the purification (*zakat*) of one’s wealth by its free and open handed distribution among those less fortunate or lacking in basic amenities and, if possible, once in a lifetime, the pilgrimage,

that paradigm of all our journeys, to the first place of worship on earth (*al bayti-l-ʿattiq*) which was initiated in Makkah the Blessed by our great grandfather, the prophet ʿĀdam, at the time of his re-union on this earth with his wife, our grandmother Ḥawah (Eve), a pilgrimage re-initiated by the Prophet ʿIbārāhim and his first born, the prophet ʿIsmāʿil and, later, purified and perfected by the Last and Final Prophet, Muhammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon them all.



## intimacy or concord iʿtilāf

The outcome and the first sign of success (*tawfiq*) on the Way is a certain intimacy (*ʿulf*) which is the natural outgrowth of reaching accord and accommodating oneself with and to the Divinely Revealed Law. We cannot emphasize the importance of this step along the path of love of Allāh. In the present age with its ‘do it yourself’ approach and ‘whatever’ mentality coupled with the glorification of ‘individuality’ and ‘personality’ it may be hard for the non-Muslim reader to even begin to construct what it would mean to live in accord with Divine Law. Even for many believers in earlier Divinely Revealed Ways, given the current emphasis on ‘liberation theology’ and the exaggerated emphasis placed on ‘social’ consciousness rather than ‘God’ consciousness or ‘class struggle’ rather than the struggle (*jihad*) with one’s unrepentant self (*nafs*), it may be difficult to imagine the absolute necessity

of adhering to the Law and you the reader may think that we are writing this from a 'fundamentalist' position (which in a certain sense we are—though certainly not on the level of ideology). It would, however, be more accurate to view our approach from the perspective of 'traditional' values even though these values are under heavy attack and are everywhere disappearing from today's world.

When we, and those who have preceded us, speak of intimacy or concord with Allāh, we are speaking of a very early stage of intimacy for which concord is perhaps a better rendition of the meaning though both are accurate as also are affection, congeniality and simple friendship. It is the station to which a great number of pious Muslims, many of them quite simple souls, reach and it is a place of deep satisfaction, quiet contentment and a kind of effortless harmony and limpid grace. <sup>ʿ</sup>*Ulfah* carries with it a feeling that, as one has accepted Allāh, so one is accepted by Allāh. <sup>ʿ</sup>*Ulfah* reflects a picture of a world at peace (even though wars may be raging around one); a world which is whole and seamless. It is a world in which there is time. Time to live, time to breathe, time for children, time for family, time for friends, time to create, time for beauty, time to love, time to worship, time to do nothing but spend hours in the remembrance of Allāh (*dhikru-ʿllāh*) and time to grow old and time to die amongst friends and family, kith and kin. In truth it is a world that not too long ago vast numbers of the believers across the world dwelt within, though everywhere today it is under attack, and like all 'natural' habitats, it is

being ravaged and raped. In reality the ‘modern’ ecological crisis is but the outer reflection of a much deeper malaise which has to do with the destruction of the ‘traditional’ world itself which of necessity is always firmly integrated with the changing rhythms and unfolding exigencies of life upon earth; a world, as such, which is rooted in the Divinely Revealed Principles and Laws upon which that world is constructed.

The ecological crisis is a another name for the destruction, both of the environment and the traditional peoples who must of necessity live in harmony with that environment, that is being carried out by the secularist and secularising enemies of ‘God’ who, with hatred and greed written upon their faces, their fists lifted against heaven and their hearts closed to the true reason and purpose of life seek the extirpation of all manifestations of the sacred in order to replace the free gift of the sacred with the profane and costly products of their lifeless manufacture.

Only those who submit and surrender (*ʿistislām*) will ever divine an inkling of this concord (*iʿtilāf*) with what *Is* which is Being Itself. It is the true state of ʿIslām and the real ʿIslāmic state which the modern ideologues will never, and can never, reach. It is the state of safety, well being, security (*amānah*) and peace (*salām*) built on complete concord with Allāh and carrying out the Orders incumbent on us as human beings. Everything has its price and the price of peace (*salām*) is surrender (*ʿislām*). “*It was said to him. Enter the Garden. He said, ‘would that my people knew.’*” (36:26)



## attachment or ta‘alluq

In one sense each layer emerges from out of the preceding layer rather in the way that one peels an onion or sinks in ever deeper depths of contemplation. In another sense the stages of love are the rungs on a ladder (*‘urūj*) which is climbed often with great effort and sometimes with amazing ease suffused by a wholly free and effortless grant (*minān*) of the Grace of Allāh. At this stage the lover has gotten or been given a pure ‘taste’ (*dḥawq*) of love. Our ṣhaykh, Sīdī Abū-l-Ḥasan aṣh-Shādhḍhulī, may Allāh sanctify his secret, was questioned about love and he said, “Love is something granted by Allāh to the heart of His Slave which distracts him from everything else other than Him, to the point that you see your lower self inclining to Him, the intellect protecting itself by spiritual knowledge of Him, the spirit rapt in His Presence, the inner secret soul overwhelmed in contemplation of Him. The slave asks for more, and more is given, and he enters into the sweetest of delights of spiritual communion with Him. He is clad in raiment that befits the approach to Him upon the carpet of proximity and he comes into contact with virgin reality and revealed science. For that reason it is said that the *awliyā’* (friends) are the brides of Allāh.”

The one who questioned said to the Ṣhaykh, “Now that I have come to know of love tell me, what is the drink (*ṣḥarāb*) of love, what is the cup (*kā’*s) of love, who is the cupbearer

(*sāqī*), what is the tasting (*dḥawq*), what is the drinking (*shurb*), what is repletion (*riy*), what is intoxication (*sukr*) and what is sobriety (*ṣahw*)?”

He replied, may Allāh sanctify his secret, “The drink is the light radiating from the beauty of the Beloved. The cup is the distillation of the subtle essence of the Mercy (*luṭf*) which brings that light into contact with the lips of the heart. The Cupbearer is He who befriends the greatest of the elect and the righteous ones from among His slaves. He is Allāh, the One who knows the capacities and affairs of His Friends. If to anyone there is disclosed that Beauty, if he enjoys it for one breath or two, and then the veil is dropped over it, he is a ‘taster’ who will yearn for the rest of his life for another ‘taste’. If he continues for an hour or more he is the ‘drinker’. If the experience becomes continuous and he drink until his veins and all his members become filled with the treasured lights of Allāh, then that is repletion.

“Often one becomes unconscious of sense and mental perceptions so that he knows neither what is said nor what he said, that is intoxication. Sometime the cups circulate among them, states differ, they are turned back to Remembrance (*dḥikr*) mystical states (*aḥwāl*) and the statutory injunctions (*furūd*). They are not veiled from the physical attributes in spite of their having drunk as much as they could. That is the time of their sobriety, of the broadening of their mental vision and of the increase of their works. So by the stars of knowledge and the moon of unity they are guided across the



— Love of Allāh —

night and by the sun of spiritual knowledge they obtain light.  
*‘These are the party of Allāh... and lo, is it not the partisans of  
Allah who are the victorious?’ ”(58:22)*

Thus do the lovers get ‘attached’ to the Beloved until they cry  
out,

“Oh my Beloved! What is life without You?  
To live outside of Your Presence  
Is to live a life of death. ”



## tenderness or laṭāfah

Walking in a dusty lane  
Someone calls  
my Beloved’s Name.  
My coat is torn.  
Tears betray me. I am totally lost.

At this stage the heart of the lover becomes very pliable and soft. One is no longer searching for the beloved but is fearful of being cast out. It is the beginning of what will become an increasing case of helplessness and hopelessness. One knows now beyond a doubt that there is no one and no where — there is only the Beloved, and where ever the Beloved is, is the only place to be, and what ever comes from the Beloved is the only thing of any intrinsic value. One story in the world-famous tale told by Mawlanā Jalālu-d-Dīn Rumī, may Allāh sanctify his

secret, of Majnūn the mad lover of Laylah. He recounts how Majnūn was found fondling a dog. Those who have found him doing so berated him saying, “Yā Majnūn how can you fondle that filthy animal, so impure and unclean?” Majnūn replies, “You see but a picture on the wall. Look further. Spend the night with me and see through my eyes. This is a gift from my Lord for this is no mere dog. It is the watchdog on the street where Laylah lives.” A lover said, “When I first entered into the presence of the Beloved I lost sight of this world and the next. Now that my time is spent with the Beloved I have cut my connection with the entire universe.”

The late Shāykh Muzaffar Ozak al-Jerrahi, may Allāh sanctify his secret, wrote, “The life of this world is transitory and fleeting. The greatest investment for the permanent and eternal world is faith and faith alone; it is worship, it is obedience and love for Allāh exalted is He. We came from Allāh and unto Him shall we return. Therefore those who possess intelligence, conscience and common sense never let it out of their minds for one moment that He is in every way worthy of being loved, that He is the True Beloved. They regard His Service as the true sovereignty and long to be with Him at every breath. They love what He loves and hate what He hates. They blame what He blames and praise what He praises.”

There are those who look on what He has prescribed as a burden, a heavy duty. The people of *laṭāfah*, those penetrated by the pure distillation of the essence of mercy, know that they have been honoured to be admitted into His Presence by His

Command. So delicate and tender have they become that the slightest whisper of a command or hint from the Beloved is enough. Does He say, “*proclaim the praise of your Lord in the night and at the declining of the stars,*” (50:40) they then watch and pray through the depths of the night. When He commands, “*Glorify your Lord in the watches of the night.*” (20:130) they hear and they obey chanting the night away. If He says further, “*he who is obedient in the watches of the night prostrating and standing, afraid of the world to come, hoping for the mercy of his Lord,*” (39:9) then you find the lover sunk deep in prostration, bowing before Him, standing in His Presence.

The heart listens strung on a thread for whatever it is He has to say. Everything the lover sees, like Majnūn’s dog, reminds one of the One who is loved the One Beloved. A word, a glance, a smile, a breeze, the twinkle of a star, a summer night street and honeysuckle on the breeze, unseen voices on the late night porches, some notes from a distant radio, a floating refrain, the blind shaykh wails and

“All these things only remind me of You.”



## ardour or ʿisḥtiyāq

Now does ʿisḥq come to possess the soul. Now come the beginnings of the ravishment. In the long hours of the night the heart is slowly emptied and drained of all else but the Beloved.

In the crowd of the beloveds of this world

— and the next —

I gaze at Your Face alone and I am a slave of Your Face alone

I speak not of the Gardens of Eden

nor do I smell the sweet flowers.

I seek nought but You nor is there ought but You.

The story is told of the great Ṣhaykh, ʿIbārāhīm bin Adham, may Allāh sanctify his secret, who, born a prince, gave up his kingdom to take the Way of Allāh.

Once when undertaking ḥajj he made an agreement with one of his travelling companions that if either of them were to witness in the other an act not in accord with ṣharīʿah, they would bring it to the other's attention. Upon entering the Holy City of Makkah, may Allāh preserve it, they saw a handsome youth. ʿIbārāhīm continued to stare at him and his companion promptly warned him reminding him of their agreement. ʿIbārāhīm replied, "He was my only son and was separated from me whilst still a youth and I have just seen him now after all these years." His friend said, "Go to him, man." ʿIbārāhīm said, "Nay

but I have relinquished him for the sake of Allāh and I shall not take back what I gave up for Him,” reciting the verses:

For the sake of Your Love I have forsaken this world!

In beholding Thee

I am sore with grief and longing for my wife and children.

But even though every limb of my body be dismembered

Even then, even then would my heart turn to none but You.

Sayyidah Rābi‘ah al-Adwiyya, Allāh sanctify her secret, says,

“There is no sin greater than my existence.”

Love is that flame that when it blazes up

consumes everything but the Beloved.

The lover drives home the sword of Not (*lāā*)

that all others (*‘illaha*) might die

other than Allāh (*illā‘llāh*)

Hail mighty Love destroyer of all ‘others’.

One of the lovers of the Face of Allāh who learned the secret of love says, “In a village by the Nile my eyes fell on a beautiful woman. I was shot through by the arrow shaft of her love. My ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ was filled with unremitting hot desire and I pined for my love — days upon end — giving up eating and drinking until my very breath was fire. I noticed then that when I breathed out my breath of fire was met with an other from the sky. I could not understand this until I came to know there was an Other who was my true Beloved on High.”

“The wailing of suffering lovers is the torch that burns all sin to ashes.”

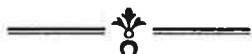


## passion or hawa

At this point the lover steps over the edge and is no longer courting the Beloved but is courting ruin and disaster. The root of hawa is to be found in hawā which means to drop, to fall, to tumble, to be overthrown. Allāh uses it to speak of the “*man hurled to ruin* (hawā)” (20:81) of the “*wind that sweeps him (tahwi) headlong to a place far away*” (22:31) and speaks of him who “*inclined toward the earth and followed his own desire* (hawā)” (7:176), and warns the believers, “*do not follow the desires* (hawā) *of a people who went astray*” (5:77), and of the pit of raging fire (hāwiyyah) that will be the womb of he “*whose scales are light*” (101:8) of good deeds at the end of time like “*one lured (istahwā) to bewilderment in the earth.*” (6:71) “*as they come hurrying on in fear, their heads upraised, their seeing lost and their hearts void*” (hawāā) {14:43} And of “*the Subverted City He also overthrew* (ahwā).” (53:53)

For this reason one of the lovers of Allāh remarked, “For hearts smitten by passion there is nothing save patience to cleanse their hearts until they become like water — still like a mirror.”

But in the time when one has embraced the passion and the passion has embraced one there is nothing which can be done. It is a headlong screaming fall into the void with absolutely no hope that it will ever be anything more than that screaming fall and with no hope that anything other than terror and abandonment lie in store.



I am the lover of my Friend.

I am not concerned with union or separation.

If I do not get my life through the lips of the True Beloved  
why should I care to live at all with other than my Beloved?

I am a victim of desire for my Sweet Heart.

I have no fear of the law. I am an absolute pauper.

I need the Beloved alone.

I care neither for the Garden nor the Fire

&

certainly I care not for my self.

My miḥrab is the eyebrows of my Beloved.

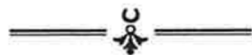
My Qiblah

— the Heart —

If you are really a lover then say after me,

“All is one

Faith and Infidelity.”





## utter bewilderment or ḥāā'ir

O cup bearer.

Bring me the wine of my faith and belief.

Let me lose consciousness if only for one minute.

If I might for one moment not be I

and there be only You

then being drunk will become my religion.

Having reached the brink of no longer knowing the difference between Faith and Infidelity the Lover has reached a very dangerous rung on the ladder of love which led one ṣhaykh to say, "A thousand ships have disappeared down that whirlpool and not even a plank was ever found along the shore."

"Your love has made me a profligate.

I have given up the conventions.

So much for my life of peace."

Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazali, Allāh be pleased with him, wrote, "The beloved is always a beloved. His attributes are unconcern and freedom from want. The lover is always a lover. His attributes are poverty and want. The lover requires the beloved. The beloved requires nothing. The lover is full of concern and the beloved has no concerns."

If you are really the Lover who truly loves the Beloved how could you even presume to 'want' anything, for whatever one



receives from the Beloved is more than enough. Yet not an hour goes by that the heart does not fly to the Beloved. Will He notice me? Does He care? If I spend the night upon my knees will He hear my pleas? Oh please hear my pleas. I suffer a thousand cuts. I'm bathing in blood. How can I presume to make my 'self' known; to force my 'self' upon the Beloved but yet I must, I must, for I can't live if living is without You. I must see you I must, I must.

And so does each Lover cry, "*Show me (Your Self) that I may gaze upon You,*" (7:143) only to be answered, "*You may not see Me.*" (7:143)

And if the Beloved goes 'away' for even a day, then what, or worse disappears for days on end?

Eyes red with tears. Heart anxious with longing. Knocking on all the doors in the 'neighbourhood'. Seeking some word, some news, any news of the beloved.

I thought I would find her today  
but I found she is still far away.

I am asking if you know where she is?  
Since she left I have had no news.

If I knew where her people camped  
or to what country she might have gone.

I would ride the wind after her  
even if she were beyond the stars.



## ravishment or shaghif

The lover never sleeps, can't eat, can't think; is, in short, bereft of all reason and sense, burning one moment and freezing the next. Tears flow only to be followed by waves of painful joy. Merely to catch sight of the Beloved from the corner of one's eye is to lose hours and days. One runs from people, wanting only to be alone with the Beloved. One hides in the back of hall of the houses of prostration (*al-masājid*) counting the endless praises of the Beloved. One lives only to hear the words of the Beloved: from the Qāri {reciter of Qur'ān} or the Torch Singer, from a radio in a cafe or the loudspeaker as one passes through the station on the slow midnight train to Lamakān. If one cannot hear the Words of the Beloved any words will do because everything is You; there is no other Speaker and there are no other words but Yours. Its the Singer not the song.

I don't know where I'm going.

You are the road. You are the map.

Please! Please! Don't go anywhere without me.

“Allāh in His own immutable State, Attribute and Being without undergoing any alteration in His Individuality manifests through His Attribute of Light in the forms of phenomenal objects, which in reality are but reflected entities, expressing, outwardly, the essences which subsist alone in the Knowledge of Allāh.”

“It was evening. After the prayers were complete I left the masjid through the courtyard door rather than the one which opens out into the market {*as-sūq*}. The sky was deep blue; the gold and red all fled. A single star, or was it a planet, hung in the West. The lime trees which bordered the garden surrounding the courtyard were filled with the sweet chittering of tiny birds settling down for the night. From the centre of the courtyard came the splashing of water as some latecomer for the evening prayer completed his ablutions. In the blue light each drop of water was a pearl; a diadem shown forth upon his head; bright luminous sparks fell from his hands. From deep inside the masjid someone was reading from al-Qur’ān and had reached the place where it is written “*Allāh has made faith dear to you and beautified it within your hearts.*” (49:7)

“My soul flies from my body. The entire universe stands transfigured. Passing into the side street, the people hurrying home through the street were each of them angels. The houses themselves glowed with the light of the souls within them. Tears coursed down my cheeks wetting my beard. I felt I could not draw another breath, live another minute. I just can’t live if living is without You.”

‘Iraqī says,

“Let me tell you the real story of my Friend.

Everything comes from Him and everything belongs to Him.

His grace shines out from every mote of dust.

The only veil is taking it for granted.”



## ecstasy or wajd

Once the lover comes to recognize and know (*‘arafa*) that there is no thing but the Beloved, no thing but Love, for the entire universe is Love it ‘self’ and in reality (*ḥaqiqāh*) the Beloved is both Love and Lover, then at that moment he or she is released from the pervading lie of the secular material world with its myriad object < > subject relationships as well as the trap of imagining that love is to be ‘found’ in some place in some one or some thing ‘else’ which has become, through knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) impossible, for there is not now any one or thing else other than Allāh so there is neither a ‘who’ nor a ‘where’ to find Love, for Love was never lost except in forgetfulness (*ghaflah*).

A standard definition of ecstasy is, “being outside oneself,” but experientially it is really to be totally “within oneself” or, perhaps, “outside in”. We touch here on a very delicate point and one which most organisations, be they religious, political or secular, seek covertly to obscure and overtly to hide. We would be worse than fools if we did not understand that the religious impulse has everywhere been co-opted by ‘central’ authorities and state terrorists of one form or another who, operating under the ‘outer’ forms of ‘religion’, portray Allāh as a jailer rather than a Lover and by so doing seek to, at least, obfuscate, and, at all costs, to hide from practitioners the message of dynamic spiritual freedom and pure liquid ecstasy

which arises from the reciprocated and reciprocating love of the Supreme Being. The reasons for this are not hard to understand. The free lover is just that, Free and a Lover.

Nothing is more threatening to any system of organisation because to 'be' Free and to 'be' a Lover immersed in ecstasy is to finally 'be' beyond postponed and future rewards, the ever vanishing promise of a now that somehow never is. It is to 'be' beyond both the carrot and the stick and it is definitely to cease being a donkey. To be an ecstatic lover means that there are no enticements, no lures, no place where one 'must' go or 'should' go other than where one 'does' go because one 'loves' to and is 'free' for in Truth and Reality "*there is no coercion in religion.*" (2:256) nor could there possibly be.

It is, furthermore, to see beyond the ultimate social lie and cultural taboo which is death. This is true especially in the modern secular society which is oriented on the basis of 'risk aversion' and which uses death, and the fear of death and the constant repetition of images of violent and random death as the ultimate means of regulating and ordering people. It is amply manifest in all forms of the media (the collective unconscious of the society) whose main focus of attention and incessant concern is so often, moment by moment, death be it by war, crime, accident, famine, rape, riot, weather or violence. The latest news is always who died how and how many where and never who is in love unless it be the lewdness the world takes for love and love is never lewd and only the Lover knows that death is the ultimate ecstasy.

“Love embraced my spirit before I was born,  
it embraced me in the cradle and when I was weaned.

It grew as I grew.

Indeed it shall embrace me on my death bed  
for nothing can sunder that embrace.

Love will survive.

My sole visitor in the grave; beneath the stone.”

When Allāh loves you He kills in you all but Himself. When He loves you he causes ‘others’ to hate you in order that you may be His alone. To become His Lover is to surely court death for He is *the* ultimate and only Killer.



## madness or jinnah

*“Long for death if you are truthful”*

(2:94 & 62:6)

Manṣūr al-Hallāj in the Sūq al-Qatīʿah, full of sorrow cries out, “O people! Save me from Allāh. Save me from Allāh. Save me from Allāh. He has robbed me of my self and does not return me to my self! I cannot give Him the respect due to His Presence. I am afraid of His forsaking me. He will leave me deserted, forsaken, outlawed! And woe to the one who feels abandoned after having been in the Presence and abandoned after Union! Where am ‘I’ where is ‘He’? What has happened to ‘Me’?” The people weep for him. He goes on, “I have

embraced with my whole being, all Your Love oh my Holiness. You have manifested Yourself so much that it seems to me there is only You and no me. I look to my heart and find no one but You. I do not see estrangement between them and me and only familiarity between You and me. Alas, alas. I am in the prison of this life united with the whole human race. Ah You! Ah You! I beg you take me outside of this prison. Will not someone kill me?

“Oh people, most certainly when He creates His creature it is through pure goodness and if sometimes He shines forth in brilliance before her and sometimes puts a veil before her it is always that she may make progress. For if He did not shine forth everyone would deny His Existence and if He did not veil Himself everyone would be entranced. This is why He makes neither of these states to abide. But as for me there is no longer any veil between Him and me, not even a blink in time; my humanity perishes in His Divinity; my body is consumed in the flames of His Omnipotence—in order that there should not remain behind a trace nor a vestige—neither face nor description.

“Allāh is One. One wrapped in the secret between the two. There is no ‘why?’ but Huw. All forms exist in the atoms of His Divinity. For the flames of spiritual light there are hearths in this creation. For the conscience, secrets that are kept hidden deep within the privacy of hearts of absolute discretion. For being, in the depths of being, there is One who keeps my heart for Himself. My heart which aims at it and chooses it. The

science of prophecy is like the lamp of divine light. The fuse of ecstatic inspiration is the burial niche that He has prepared. By Allāh it is the breath of the uncreated Spirit that breathes into my skin each thought and the very one that 'Israfīl shall blow into his trumpet. So is He transfigured before my spirit in order that He may speak.

“If out of all that is in my heart a single atom were thrown on the mountains of the earth they would disintegrate! If on the Day of Resurrection I were to be thrown into the Fire that Fire would be consumed by my burning; and if I were entered into the Garden the dwellings within would crumble. How can the Whole bear my Part.

I am so heavy that the very earth herself cannot bear me.”

“Return to Allāh for the last Dot is His.”

“There is no ‘why’ in this world or the next world  
but Him, Oh Him.”

“What is the question? Love is the answer.”





## enslavement or ta‘bīd

Some, like Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, Allāh preserve his secret, perfume his resting place and keep fresh his memory in our hearts, are granted their wish and are ‘slain’; others ‘remain’ as His Slaves.

What is enslavement after madness? When al-Ḥallāj says, “This is why He makes neither of these states to abide,” he points to the compassionate character of the dispensation of the grace of Allāh in both revealing and hiding Himself. Some, like al-Ḥallāj, who for a variety of reasons demand to be ‘removed from the prison’, are spared the life of continuing ‘slavery’; others relish and court slavery living life only to adore the Lord and devoting their lives solely to the Beloved and His wishes with no wish of their own. Indeed, and there are many of the shining and luminous esoteric personalities who take this position, it can be argued that al-Ḥallāj, [leaving aside his own overriding predilection for the station of the *abdāl* (substitute or vicarious sacrifice) rather than the ‘*abdāl* (perfect slave)], stopped short of what is demanded of the true lover insofar as he still ‘wanted’ something for ‘himself’ (if it can be said there was any longer a ‘he’ that wanted or indeed any ‘he’ who was capable of wanting) rather than surrendering everything, including *his* ‘desire’ in favour of His Desire which is, “*I have not created jinn and humanity other than to worship (ya‘budūn) Me.*” (51:56)

In this sense it is to forsake oneself for the sake of Love and to cut one's ties with all other than Allāh and in that same sense it is to go beyond the realm of state (*ḥal*) and to arrive at station (*maqām*). The man of state (*ḥal*) can be likened to a river through which the Love of Allāh flows; at times this flow is increased to the point where it overflows the banks and floods the surrounding lands. The man of station (*maqām*) is likened to an ocean. No matter how heavy and abundant the Divine Rain (*ghayth*) of Unveiling (*jilwah*) and Transfiguration (*tajalliyyah*) the Ocean contains it.

Shaykh Abū-l-Ḥasan aṣḥ-Shādhḍulī, Allāh preserve his secret, says, "These are the people whom Allāh has created for His Pure Worship and has purified for faithfulness to His Divine Unicity (*tawḥīdu rubūbiyyah*) and the following of His Revelation. He has pleased them by the secrets of the Lights of His Presence and supported them by the meanings of Spiritual Wisdom and granted them His providential solicitude. He has caused their intelligence to roam in His Vast Sublimity and enlightened the darkness of their selves (*nafs*) by removing from them the oppressive darkness (*dhulm*) of ignorance (*jahl*). He has guided them by the stars of knowledge and the sun of His Spiritual Knowledge. He has consolidated their doctrinal understanding by clear proofs from His Book and Practice. He obliterated their might by establishing the victory of His Desires and concealed their will in the Supremacy of His Will. He has beautified them with the establishment of abstinence and made them to dwell in the condition of reliance. He honoured

them with scrupulous concern (*warāʿ*) and the lights of knowledge. He inspired them abundantly and enriched them beyond the need of 'other' than Him. He made some of them to be keys to open the hearts of mortals and flowing springs from which they both give and receive. He has veiled them by Destiny in order that they might become singular in the truth of their secret. You will not know them by their appearance for their inner soul is Truth and outwardly they are invisible due to their being like anyone and no one. Outwardly they are the poor and inwardly they are wealthy. They are the Pure Ones (*al-mukḥliṣīn*)."



## effacement or maḥabbah

Maḥabbah is from ḥabba which is to love and from ḥabba which is to seed. They are identical in spelling. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh as-Sakandārī, says, "Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity for whatever sprouts without having been first buried flowers imperfectly." Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj says, "The essence of *maḥabbah* is that you should shake off your many and various qualities and instead find your subsistence in the Beloved alone." al-Qushayrī says, "The essence of *maḥabbah* is that you should surrender your entire existence to the Beloved and leave nothing for your self." Sahl at-Tustarī says, "*Maḥabbah* is obedience and forsaking your own needs and wants." Abū ʿAlī al-Rūdḥbārī says, "Unless you get out of yourself you cannot enter into *maḥabbah*." May Allāh sanctify their secret.

Those who *know*, or think they know, Arabic will question our translation of maḥabbah as 'effacement' preferring the more common understanding of the word which corresponds more or less to the English word 'love'. Since the word 'love' is by now threadbare from over use (unfortunately for indeed love is a very great rarity) and, even worse, abused and debased we wished to point to a very particular aspect of love which is included within the 'meaning' of maḥabbah or love. If we return for a moment to the last rung or stage which was that of enslavement or *ta'abid* we can easily understand from personal experience how it is possible to be a worshipper, a slave, a devotee, a perfect servant and still, albeit on the most subtle of levels, assert and insert one's necessarily impure or appetitive self (*nafs*) into the matter. Even to claim 'slavery' is to assert oneself and turn the Beloved into 'other' and to claim 'poverty' (*faqr*) is an insult to the Beloved. That the 'self' is impure is not because of any 'original sin' but impure simply because at the very end it still remains 'other'. Rābi'ah al-Adawiyah (d185H - 801M), Allah sanctify her secret, said, "There is no sin (*dhanb*) greater than my existence." Thus all the really great lovers (*muḥibbūn*) have known that beyond slavery lay the realm of pure love which could only be entered if one was 'naked' of self and that it remained to even the most humble and pure of the slaves to divest their 'self' of the garments of self, garment by garment, step by step, layer by layer until one was truly naked and devoid of every 'thing' and attribute.

If you want to make love  
you better take off your clothes.

It is well known that the last hiding place and ultimate refuge of our arch-enemy Shayṭān, “*and he is a clear enemy to you*” (2:168) is the heart wherein he whispers his ongoing and never ending tale of delusion which begins “*I am better than he*” (7:12) and ends burning outside the Garden for “no one with an atom of pride shall enter the Garden” (*ḥadith qudsī*). All separation begins with “I” and ends in “Thou.” As-Saqāṭī, Allāh sanctify his secret, says, “Love never really exists between two people until the one addresses the other as ‘I’.”

Shaykh ‘Abdu-l-Qadir Jilānī, Allāh sanctify his secret says, “Love (*maḥabbah*) is a veil between the lover and the Beloved. When the lover is finally lost in love there is neither lover nor Beloved. There is only Love (*al-wadūd*) and Love is all-in-all.”

Allāh stayed. The rest passed.

By Allāh there is no thing but Allāh.



## annihilation or fanā’

Annihilation or fanā’ is to die to the limited self. In the realm of the shari‘ah it is to refrain from evil and the forbidden and enjoin the good and practice it in one’s life. In the realm of tariqah fanā’ is to annihilate (*halaka*) your ‘self’ in the character (*ʿakḥlaq*) of Allāh. In the realm of the ḥaqiqah it is to relinquish any claim of the “I” to a separate existence. As such it is to become a total partisan and true friend (*walī*) of Allah.

Here we reach a very delicate point. The question is how can the 'I' surrender its limited existence when the very act of surrender is an act of assertion by an 'other' being that it exists in the illusion of independence and separateness. This is why Allāh says, "*The majority believe in Allāh only they are idolaters (mushrikīn).*" (12:106)

Among the Ṣūfis it has been understood as a coming together of Transparency (*ash-shaffaḥfiyyah*) and Disappearance (*al-ʾikhtifāʾ*) and may be found clearly enunciated in the Doctrine of the Cessation of Self-Will or the Dropping of Self Direction. (*ʾisqatu-t-tabdīrah*).

Shaykh Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh as-Sakandārī, may Allāh sanctify his secret, addresses this issue at the very beginning of his Book of Wisdom (*Kitāb al-Ḥikām*) (trans. Dr. ʿAbdu-l-Jabbār Danner),

(4)

Rest yourself from self-direction.  
For what Someone Else has carried out on your behalf  
you must not yourself undertake to do.

(5)

Your striving for what has already been guaranteed to you  
and your remissness in what is demanded of you  
are signs of the blurring of your intellect.

(8)

If He opens a door for you, thereby making Himself known,  
pay no heed if your deeds do not measure up to this.  
For, in truth, He has not opened it for you  
but out of desire to make Himself known to you.

Do you not know that He is the One  
who presented the knowledge of Himself to you,  
whereas you are the one who presented Him with deeds?  
What a difference between  
what He brings to you and what you present to Him!

Many Muslims, looking from the realm of the ḥaḳīqah have understood this crucial question of the final surrender in accord with the saying of Allāh, *“That is the bounty of Allāh which he bestows on whom He Wills. And the Bounty of Allāh is without end or limit.”* (62:4) Whereas annihilation seen from the realm of ṣharī‘ah and ṭarīqah are, at least partially, a matter of individual effort, the final surrender of self and one’s disappearance from one’s self in one’s Self is, we believe, a matter of the bestowal of Divine Grace.

It is a matter of changing one’s viewpoint and perspective; it is knowing who it is who can or does say “I”. To see Allāh through Allāh rather than to see Allāh through creation. Allāh orders the prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him to say, *“This is my way. I call to Allāh by insight (baṣīrah). I and who ever follows me. To Allāh is the Glory and I am not from the idolaters. (mushrikīn)”* (12:108)

Before touching on the dimension of communion (*wiṣāl*) we must clarify for our readers certain areas of the Qur’ān which may appear inconsistent from the perspective of a rigorous monotheism. Sometimes we hear people ask; “If Allāh admonishes us to ‘Say, He (huwa), Allāh is One. The Eternal Self-Existant. Neither begetting nor begotten and there in no

*one who is like Him*' (112:1-4) and then He says, '*Truly I (anā) am Allāh and there is no deity other than 'I'* (20:14) then why does He also, since He is One, speak of Himself as 'We' as in, '*Truly it is We (naḥnu) who have created man and We know what his soul whispers to him and We are closer to him than his jugular vein.*' (50:16) How is it that He is both He and We and I since He is One?"

The apparent multiplicity connoted in the use of "We" rises when Allāh refers to His many and various attributes (*ṣifah*) and their effects (*aḥʿal*) or traces (*aṭḥār*) which appear in the creation, some of which appear opposed to one another as in 'The Life Giver' (*al-yuḥyi*) and 'The Killer' (*al-mumīt*) or The Conqueror (*al-qahar*) and The Clement (*al-ḥalīm*) and others of which augment as in The First (*al-ʿāwwal*) and The Last (*al-ʾāākḥir*, The Inner {*al-bātin*} and the Outer {*aḍḥ-ḍḥāhir*} and others which compliment as in The Mercy Full (*ar-raḥmān*) and The Bestower of Mercy (*ar-raḥīm*) or The Creator of All (*al-kḥāliq*), The Shaper from Nought (*al-bārʿi*), The Former of Images (*al-muṣawwir*).

When Allāh makes use of the pronouns "He" and "I" it is in reference to external (*bātin*) and internal (*ḍḥāhir*) reality. His inward reality is expressed by *anā* or "I" and His outer reality by *huwa* or "He". It should also be most clearly understood that his "He"ness is not in opposition or in contradistinction to His "She"ness or, for that matter, Her "His"ness lest we fall in the contemporary trap of what are euphemistically called in common parlance, 'gender issues'.



Indeed it is only by infinite grace that we can speak of anything at all for at the most basic level of reality, and viewing The Supreme Being in Its most transcendent (*tanzīh*) mode, we cannot speak of anything. To say anything is to limit (by our words or descriptions) that which by nature is Absolutely Unlimited and make contingent the Absolute and quantify That which is quantum to all description and name. Even to use the Name, *Allāh*, which has never referred to any thing or any one other than Allāh and has no root but itself is, as Banī ʿIsrāʾīl know, in truth, an act of presumption and audacity even though in His Mercy {*ar-rahmah*} He has sanctioned our invocation, lest we be left hopelessly impoverished and bereft of the intimate experience of the Presence. Consider the words of the Sage Lao Tzu as set forth in the Book of the Way:

As for the Way,  
the Way that can be spoken of is not the Way  
As for the Names,  
The Name that can be named is not the constant Name  
if we replace Way (Tao) with Allāh we might say  
As for Allāh,  
the Allāh that can be spoken of is not Allāh  
As for the Names,  
The Name that can be named is not the constant Name

This unquantifiable absolute is referred to in Qurʾān when Allāh says, “*No thing is like Him.*” (42:11) but, because Allāh has designated the adherents of his Final Revelation to be “*the nation of the middle*” or “*the nation of the heart*” (*ummataw-wassaʿā*) (2:143), He follows by qualifying that Absolute in

saying “*He is the Hearer, the Seer*” (42:12) thus creating a paradox of interpenetrating Transcendence (*tanzih*) and Immanence (*tashbih*) which, when it erupts into time and tears the fabric of space, confers the dimension of eternity which allows us the possibility to take another step — closer.



## communion or wiṣāl

سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا  
مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا  
الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ ءَايَاتِنَا  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

SUBĤĤĀNA-L-LADĤĪĪ ḠASRĀ BI-ḠABĤDIHI LAYLAM-  
MINA-L-MASJIDI-L-ḤARĀMI  
ḠILĀ-L-MASJIDI-L-ḠAQḤḤĀ-L-  
LADĤĪ BARĀKĀNĀ ḤŌWLAHŪ LI-NURIYAHŪ  
MAN ḠĀYĀTINĀ :  
ḠINNAHU HUWA-S-SAMĪḠU-L-BAṢĪR

*Glory to Him who carried His Slave  
from the inviolable sanctuary of prostration  
to the furthest sanctuary of prostration  
— the precincts of which We have blessed —  
that We might show him Our Signs  
Truly He is the Hearer, the Seer.*

(17:1)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

- وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ
- مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ
- وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ
- إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ
- عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ
- ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ
- وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ
- ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ
- فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ
- فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ
- مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ
- أَفَتُمَرُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ
- وَلَقَدْ رَءَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ
- عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ
- عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ
- إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ
- مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ
- لَغَدَّ رَأْيٌ مِنْ ءَايَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ

*By the shooting star. ○*  
*Your companion is not astray nor is he deceived. ○*  
*Nor does he speak out of his own desire. ○*  
*This is nothing but revelation revealed. ○*  
*Taught to him by one awe full in power. ○*  
*Enduring, Poised. ○ At the highest level of vision ○*  
*Then he came near — hung — suspended ○*  
*two bows length or nearer. ○*  
*He revealed to His Slave what He revealed. ○*  
*His heart does not lie in what it saw. ○*  
*Will you argue with him about what he saw? ○*  
*And he saw him another time. ○*  
*At the Lote Tree of the Ultimate Frontier. ○*  
*Near to the Garden of Refuge. ○*  
*When that which enshrouds did enshroud. ○*  
*The eye did not swerve nor stray. ○*  
*In truth he saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord. ○*  
(53:1-18)

The preceding āyāt (signs or verses) from the Surah of the Night Journey and the Surah of the Star are the bare bones account of a journey by the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, in the company of the Archangel Jibr'il (Gabriel), peace be upon him. A journey from the Ancient House (*baytu-Patiq*) in Makkah the Blessed to the Holy House (*baytu-l-muqadis*) in al-Quds ash-Sharīf (Jerusalem), al-'Aqṣā, the far distant place of prostration where he led the prayers for his brother Prophets who had gathered there in their earthly forms, blessing of Allāh and peace upon them all, among whom were 'Ibārāhīm (Abraham), Mūsā (Moses) and 'Isā (Jesus). He then ascended through the seven heavens where he

met again with many of the Prophets, now in their celestial spiritual forms, and upon reaching the seventh plane, he took leave of the Archangel, who, though an Angel of the Presence, could go no farther and went on alone to the Lote tree at the absolute outermost boundary (*sidrati-l-muntahā*) of which is said in the oldest commentaries, “The Lote Tree has its roots in the Throne (*al-arsh*) and it marks the end of the knowledge of every knower be he a Messenger or an Angel. All beyond this is a hidden mystery known to Allāh alone.” Here the Light of Allāh (*nūru-l-llāh*) descended on the Tree shrouding it and all else in leaves of light. During this ascension in which he traversed the entire range of the horizons or levels of being, understanding and knowledge as manifest in the ‘beings’ of each of the preceding messengers, the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and them, neither lost consciousness nor did his eye waver. His heart did not lie. It was here according to traditions (*hadith*) recorded in Saḥīḥ Muslim, that he was given one of the greatest means of communion: the five times daily *ṣalāh*, as well as one of the core signs (*āyat*) enumerating the basic tenets upon which the creed of surrender (*dīnu-l-ʿislām*) is based,

*“The Messenger  
believes in what was sent down to him from his Lord.  
And the believers, each one believes in Allāh,  
and His Angels, and His Books and His Messengers;  
we make no distinction between any one of His Messengers.  
and say, “We hear and we obey. ’  
Forgive us Oh Lord and unto You is our final destination. ”  
(2:285)*

The scope of this short essay on the Love of Allāh does not allow us to even begin to touch the profound events and visions of this blessed journey by night which is the sequel, as is made clear in the Signs, to the first Night of Power in which the Unlettered Prophet, fasting and meditating in the cave on the Mountain of Light (*jabal an-nūr*) was first visited by the Archangel Jibrīl, peace be upon him, who brought with him the beginning of the Revelation of the Last and Final Testament to humanity encapsulated in the first command to “Read” (*ʿIqāraʿ*) the Unwritten Signs of Allāh. The Signs that he later told his beloved wife Khādijah, may Allāh be pleased with her, “Were written in light upon my heart.”

*Read!*

*Read in the Name of your Lord who created. ○*

*Created man from a clot. ○*

*Read and your Lord is the Most Generous. ○*

*Who teaches by the Pen. ○*

*Teaches man what he knows not. ○*

(96:1-5)

*“Truly We revealed it in the Night of Destiny. ○*

*and what will convey to you what is*

*the Night of Destiny. ○*

*The Night of Destiny is better than a thousand months! ○*

*the Angels and the Spirit,*

*by the permission of the Lord,*

*descend in it with every order. ○*

*Peace it is,*

*until the coming dawn. ○*

(97:1-5)

And the Unlettered One, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, described to his wife, when she questioned him how he had managed to read said that at first, and even again, he had not been able to read and it was only after the blessed angel embraced him heart to heart, blessings of Allāh be upon them, that he could 'read' the signs written in light in the depths of his heart just as on his return from his journey by night and ascension to the highest heavens when he was questioned by his wife as to what was the nature of his ultimate 'seeing' at the uttermost boundary of the Lote Tree he said "Light" and

*"Allāh is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth.  
A similitude of His light is a niche in which is a lamp.  
That lamp is in a glass  
— a glass —  
a glass like a shining star  
kindled from a blessed tree  
— an olive—  
neither from the East nor the West  
whose oil glows though no fire touches it.  
Light upon Light.  
Allah guides unto His Light whom He Wills.  
He strikes examples for people.  
Allah is the Knower of All Things. ○  
(24:35)*

We hope these intimations provide a taste (*dhawq*) of what, for the Muslim, represents the highest level of communion possible. Since ʿIslām is all reality the purified religion of ʿĀdam, Nūh, ʿIbārāhīm, Mūsā, Dawūd and ʿIsā, peace be upon them all, ʿIslām like all Pure and Divine Revelation, in accord with

the highest spiritual truth and metaphysical consequentiality, rules out the idea that at any level there is, or could be, union (*jamʿ*) with the Supreme Being or any kind of incarnation (*hulūl* or *tajassud*) of the Supreme Being in any form given the true and ultimate omnipotent nature of Allāh. An indication of that august sublimity and mighty power is shown when the prophet Mūsā, peace be upon him, implored Allāh for direct vision of Him and he was refused by Allāh who says,

*“You will not see Me;  
but gaze upon the mountains —  
if it stands still in its place  
then you shall see Me.”  
and when his Lord unveiled Himself to the mountain  
He made it to explode into dust.  
Mūsā fell down thunderstruck.  
When he regained consciousness he said,  
‘Glory be to You!  
I turn unto You in repentance  
and I am at the forefront of the sure believers.’  
(7:143)*

What we seek to communicate to our reader is that the absolute majesty and sublimity of Allāh is far beyond what we can ever imagine. Those who are *ʿarif bi-llāh* (knowers by Allāh) and have had an inkling of knowledge (*maʿrifah*) of the One True God are all in unanimity concerning this matter for they, to some small degree have experienced, if only as mere shadows, what Mūsā, peace be upon him, experienced at Sinai. To imagine union is an impossibility. It is to try to limit the



limitless; to endeavour to reduce the irreducible. Conflagration or annihilation yes. As when the moth enters the fire or, in more contemporary terms, a rocket ship enters the sun. By no means to we suggest that there is an possibility of abiding as a separate or associate entity (*sharik*) in that state.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ  
وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ  
فَبَايَءَ الْآلَاءِ رَبُّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

KULLUM-MAN ‘ALAYHĀ FĀN ○  
WA YABĀQĀ WAJHU RABBIKA  
DhŪ-L-JALĀLI WA-L-’IKRĀM ○  
FABPAYĪ ‘ALĀĀ’I RABBIKUMĀ TUKADhDhIBĀN ○

*Everything upon it shall perish.  
and all that remains is the Presence of your Lord;  
Majestic and Benevolent  
Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?  
(55:26-28)*

The great respect in which Muslims hold all the prophets and especially the Seal of the Prophets, peace and blessings of Allāh be upon them all, is in no small part due to the ability of these beings to stand at the very ends of consciousness in intimate communion with Supreme Majesty and to return to their fellow beings with the Message of truth and salvation. When we are given to glimpse the merest flash of The Terrible Power and Absolute Sublimity and Transcendent Reality,

which is what we mean when we say “Allāh”, we have a very humble idea of what it took for the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, to stand,

*At the Lote Tree of the Ultimate Frontier. ○  
Near to the Garden of Ultimate Refuge. ○  
(53:14-15)*

so whilst we love and honour all of the Messengers who have been sent to humanity we know that it is as Jesus, peace be upon him, says, “Not my will but Thine.”{Luke 21:42} which must always be done.

*Oh Jesus, son of Mary.  
Remember My favour to you and to your mother.  
How I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit  
so that you spoke in the cradle  
And how I taught you the Book and the Wisdom,  
the Torah and the Gospel.  
how you did shape clay into the likeness of a bird  
and blew upon it  
and by My Permission it became a bird  
and you healed one born blind and the leper  
by My Permission  
and raised the dead by My Permission  
and how I restrained the Children of Israel  
from (harming) you  
when you came to them with clear proofs  
and those of them who disbelieved and said,  
“It’s only magic.”○  
(5:110)*

Standing at the ends of consciousness they came to the knowledge of reality, and through this knowledge were able to gauge the varying levels or degrees of reality, for in as much as there is a spiritual hierarchy made clear by Allāh in such statements as “*We raise up in degrees whom We will,*” (6:83) and He has “*raised some of them above others in rank,*” (43:32) just so is there an hierarchy of signs or degrees of reality as is attested,

*ʿIbrāhīm (Abraham) said to his father Azar:  
Do you take idols for Allāh?  
I see that you and your people are in manifest error. ○  
In this way did We show Abraham  
the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth ○  
That he might be one possessing certainty. ○  
When the night grew dark upon him he saw a star.  
He said, 'This is my Lord.'  
when it set he said,  
'I love not things that set.' ○  
When he saw the moon rise up.  
He said, 'This is my Lord.'  
when it set he said,  
'Unless my Lord guide me I shall be one of those astray.' ○  
Then he saw the sun rise.  
He said, 'This is my Lord for it is the greater. '  
When it set he said,  
'Oh my people  
I am free of any thing you associate (with Him) ○  
'I have turned my face  
toward He who created the Heaven and the Earth.  
I am from those of pure faith.  
I am not an idolater.' ○  
(7:75-80)*

Some reading this account have asked, “Why, if ʾIbārāhīm, peace be upon him, from the time of his childhood was aware of the Oneness of Allāh, did he confuse Allāh with the various heavenly bodies?” The masters of *taʾwil* (hermeneutics) have clarified this by explaining that he was not talking about the outer heavenly bodies but the dawning of the internal realities of which the heavenly bodies are, in this case, a metaphor. The star, the moon and the sun are names of stages in an internal contemplative process (*murāqabah*) of unfolding Reality. He was thus making clear that along the road to the Truth there are both levels of unveiling and symbolic representation but in reality they are not Truth Itself.

*and when Allāh said,  
“Oh Jesus son of Mary  
did you say to the people  
‘Take my mother and me as gods along with Allāh?’  
He said, “The Glory is yours.  
It is not for me to say that which I have no right to say.  
If I said it You know it.  
You know what is in my self  
and I know not what is in Your Self.  
Truly  
You and only You are the Knower of the Unknown.” ○  
(5:11)*



If it seems as though we have strayed from the realm of love (*maḥabab*) into the realm of knowledge of reality (*maʿarifah*) this is quite true for it is in the communion that is experienced within the *fanāʾ* that the only true knowledge that there is: the “I” witnessed wisdom, is born and comes into being.

In a long set of ʾāyāt in the Surah of the Prophets the story is told of how ʾIbrāhīm, when he was a young boy and came to understand that the various ‘idols’ (ʾaṣnām) worshipped by his people were in reality powerless and merely creations of the people, set out to smash those idols and did, leaving all but one which was the biggest of all. His people were aware that he had been contemptuous in the past of their ‘idols’ and so they easily concluded that it was he who had smashed them and came to question him about his actions. He told them that the big one had done it and told them to ask the big one to tell them what had happened. This confounded them and they bade ʾIbrāhīm not to be ridiculous because everyone knows idols can’t speak. Whereupon he, peace be upon him, said to them,

*‘Why then do you worship beside Allāh  
that which can neither help you nor harm you?○  
Shame on you and all that you worship instead of Allāh!  
Don’t you have any sense?’○  
They cried out,  
‘Burn him and stand by the gods if you will do anything. ’○  
We said,  
‘O fire be coolness and peace for ʾIbrāhīm. ’ ○  
(21:66-69)*

Love is a fire and as such its nature is *jalāl*: compelling, majestic, sublime and often tyrannical. It consumes everything and that is its function. Its fuel is the self (*nafs*) and in reality (*ḥaqīqah*) all of the steps to fanā' are the self destroying itself by and for Allāh. That destruction of the self or obliteration of the self or annihilation of the self is the purification of the heart for as long as the heart is impure there is no room for Allāh and as long as there is impurity in the heart one remains a *mushrik* which is to say an idolater incapable of entering the Garden. Never mind what the idol is. It may start out in the realms of the gross world (*ad-dunyāh*) as the love of money or fame or the opposite sex or sex itself or power or position or even sanctity but along the way these gross 'idols' become refined (star, moon, sun) even to the point where religion can become an 'idol', the Qur'ān can become an 'idol', one's prayers can become an 'idol', the path itself can become an 'idol' and even Allāh can become an 'idol'. Needless to say behind all these idols is 'the big one' and that is one's own self pride in whatever disguise it may take for unless pride (*kibriyā'*) and selfish 'self'ness disappear from the heart there is no fanā', for there remains the 'other' and fanā' is the annihilation of the awareness of anything but Allāh (*ma siwa-llāh*). If there is no fanā' there is no communion, no arrival (*wiṣāl*). This is why it is said to be easier to excavate a mountain than to dig the pride out of one's own heart as the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, says, "There is a piece of flesh in the body and if you purify it the whole body is purified and if you corrupt it then the whole body is corrupt. It is the heart," which

led Sayyidinā ‘Alī, Allāh be pleased with his presence, to say, “Your remedy is in you and you do not perceive it. Your disease is from you and you do not observe it.” It is your self.

The fire of love purifies the heart. This has led all sincere seekers to become lovers and caused them to seek to die before death (*mutu qabla an tamutu*) in order that they might live forever. When the majestic (*jalāl*) fire of love has consumed the fuel of the nafs on the pyre of the heart and has burnt itself out it becomes coolness (*jamāl*) and that coolness is knowledge of Allāh in certainty (*‘ilmu-l-yaqīn*) and in this way the fire of love is transmuted into the pure and adamant light of gnosis.



## permanence or eternal life baqā’

If fanā’ is the death of one’s illusory self then baqā’ is the self coming home to its real self as it was in pre-eternity before the creation of the world when Allāh gathered together all the souls that were, are and will be, in their ‘sub-atomic’ (*d̥har*) seed (*d̥hurriyyah*) form in order to take from them the covenant (*mithāq*) and to make known to every being who would ever live both their origin (*ibtidā’*) and their final destiny (*intihā’*). Allāh spoke and each soul to be knew by the intuition of the spirit (*d̥hinu-r-rūh*), the understanding of the intellect (*fahmu-l-‘aql*) and the discernment of the heart (*fiṭnatu-l-qalb*) the Reality of The Truth {*ḥaqīqatu-l-ḥaqq*} contained in — “Am I not your Lord?” (*allastu bi-rabbikum*)

وَ إِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي ءَادَمَ  
 مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ  
 وَ أَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ  
 أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ  
 قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا  
 أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ  
 إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ۝

WA 'IDḥ 'AKḥADḥA RABBUKA MIM BANĪ 'ĀDAMA  
 MIN DḥUHŪRIHIM DḥURIYYATAHUM  
 WA 'ASHḥHADAHUM 'ALĀĀ 'ANFUSIHIM  
 'ALASTU BI-RABBIKUM  
 QĀLŪ BALĀ SHḥAHIDNĀĀ  
 'AN TAQŪLŪ YŌWMA-L-QIYĀMATI  
 'INNĀ KUNNĀ 'AN HĀDḥĀ GHĀFILĪN ۝

*And when your Lord took from the children of 'Ādam,  
 from their loins, their seed  
 and made them to be witness of their selves  
 "Am I not your Lord ?"  
 They said, "Yes! of a certainty. "  
 lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection,  
 "As for us we were not aware. " ۝*

(7:172)

This statement of the pre-eternal celestial witnessing is crucial to the understanding that within all human beings there is some



vital part that always has known the Truth both of its origin and final destination.

The way of love is thus not so much a matter of going 'somewhere' as it is an awakening, an arrival (*wiṣāl*) at where one already is and a remembering of who one always is, was and will be. Moreover it is clear that *ab origine* all humans had direct knowledge and direct witnessing of their Lord and, moreover, directly entered into a covenant of witness with their Lord, in the beginning and at the end. This direct knowledge and "I" witnessing is the great liberation from all confusion, doubt and lies. Our life did not begin when we left the womb of our mother nor did it begin when our spirit entered the foetus in the womb nor when the sperm of our father impregnated the egg of our mother. In truth our life began prior to the time of the creation itself and rose out of the desire of That which Is to know Itself. That is both our beginning (7:172) and it will be our end (55:26-28) for there is no ultimate eternal permanence other than in Allāh, by Allāh and with Allāh and we shall return to that from whence we came for "*We shall call them to Us and to Us shall they return.*" (10:46) for "*Unto Allāh all matters are returned.*" (57:5)

True salvation is freedom from idolatry which is the cause of all burning. When through the fire of love the heart is purified and that fire is transmuted into the pure light of gnosis we can say that we have both begun and resumed our conscious life for everything prior to this point, no matter how refined, has been the illusory life of egoic self and its various likes and

dislikes. In fact many of the Lovers of Allāh (*awliyāʾ*) and Knowers by Allāh (*ʿurafāʾ bi-llāh*) and members of the spiritual hierarchy hold that one is not truly alive until one has reached this station (*maqām*) in line with the Ḥadīth, “When you die you awaken.” and that the active mission of the Prophets and Messengers, peace be upon them all, was to awaken the selfish and self-centred walking dead who are the source of all agitation, disturbance and discord (*fitnah*) in the world. In this context we wish to make clear that there is a difference between the passive and active dimensions of this station, not in a ‘limiting’ sense, but rather in awareness of the hierarchical degrees among the multitude of selves who, through their total and complete surrender to, immersion in, and love of The Self, have been ‘accepted’ and exist in the realm of the (relatively) permanent (*baqāʾ*). These include the three hundred Nuqabāʾ (veiled examiners), the forty Nujubāʾ (noble couriers), the seven ʾAbdāl (substitutes), the Five Presences (of continuity), the four ʾAwtād (pillars of the directions), and the two (Imams of the Spirit and the Soul) at the side of the Quṭb (central pivot) all of whom are ‘passive’ in relation to the ‘activity’ of the Quṭb who as The Inheritor of the Muḥammadan Sanctity (*al-Warīthul-Muḥammadiyyah*) functions as the Ghawṭh (succour) for humanity at any one time. In addition there are the Rukkāb (the riders) who are themselves Aqṭāb but do not ‘act’ in the outer world though often they leave traces of their activities for those receptive enough to note them.



While we do not propose to do more than name various groupings of the spiritual hierarchy it is fitting that something should be said of them for it is they who are the true Inheritors (*warāṭḥah*) of the mandate of Heaven, and not the various self-deluded and imaginary kings, amirs, dictators, generals and presidents who strut and posture on the stage of the world. It is they alone who have been granted sovereignty (*wilāyah*) and it is they who form the hidden spiritual government (*al-ḥukumu-l-bātinnīyah*) of the world and, as such, it is they, the loyal partisans and the sincere friends of Allāh (*al-awliyāʾ-llāhi-ṣ-ṣāliḥīn*), who truly are the *kḥulafāʾ* (viceregal representatives) of here Allāh upon the earth.

Many reading (or, more accurately, mis-reading) āyāt 2:30, “*I am setting upon the earth a viceroy (kḥalifah)*” or 6:165, “*it is He who has appointed you as viceroys upon the Earth.*” or 27:62, “*then We appointed you as viceroys upon the Earth.*” consider that all of the children of ʾĀdam are *kḥulafāʾ*. *In potentia* this may be true but in actuality and reality (*ḥaqīqah*) only those who have passed through the fires of love and have emerged in the realm of knowledge (*maʿrifah*) and wisdom (*ḥikmah*) are capable of acting in such a capacity for it is only they who have transmuted themselves by dint of “*ʾāmanū wa ʿamiluṣ-ṣālihāt*” (belief and good works) (95:6) and have, in turn, been transmuted by grace (*naʿama*) from their fall, stemming from ignorance (*jahl*) and mindlessness (*ghaflah*), to the lowest of the low (*ʾasfala sāfilīn*) in consonance with

“whatever good comes to a man it is from Allāh” (4:79) and regained their true original ‘form’ of *aḥsani taqwīm*.

These human beings, men and women, are the friends of Allāh (*al-awliyāʾ*); those who have chosen Allāh out of love (*al-muḥibbīn*) for Him above all else and at the cost of all else and have in turn been chosen by Him (*yashāʾa*) to be His Beloveds (*al-maḥbbūbīn*). They alone and in truth are the only ‘chosen people’ in the world. Those who are chosen because they chose to choose and in so choosing were chosen. It is they whose ‘chosen-ness’ is predicated not on blood, or tribe or natures will or man’s but on the Perfect Grace and Will of Allāh.

فَضْرِبَ بَيْنَهُم بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ  
بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ  
وَظَاهَرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ

FAḌURIBA BAYNAHUM BI-SŪRIL-L-LAHU BĀBUM  
BĀṬINUHU FĪHI-R-RAḤMATU  
WA ḌĤĀHIRUHU MIN QIBALIHI-L-ʿADĤĀB

*A wall shall separate them wherein is a gate,  
the inner side of which is mercy  
and the outer of which is torment.*

(57:13)

It is they who have heard the call of the next world whilst still in this world and, having passed through that narrow gate, completed their life journey. They bear a passport stamped,

‘From the Living One without death to the living one who does not perish’ ‘*Min al-ḥayyu-ladḥī lā yamūtu illa-l-ḥayya-l-ladḥī lā yafūtu*’ and countersigned:

*My living — my dying  
all belong to Allāh.  
{6:162}*

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ  
أَرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مُّرْضِيَةً  
فَأَدْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي  
وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي

YĀĀ'AYYATUHĀ-N-NAFSU-L-MUṬMA'INNAH ○  
IRJPĪ'ILĀ RABBIKI RĀḌIYATAM MARḌIYYAH ○  
FA'AD KHULĪ FĪ 'IBADĪ ○ WA-D-KHULĪ JANNATĪ ○

*O self at peace. ○  
Return unto your Lord. Well pleased, well pleasing. ○  
Enter among My slaves. ○ Enter My Garden.○ ”  
(89:27:30)*

Fanā' marks the end of the journey to Allāh and baqā' marks the beginning of the journey with Allāh. It is the station of permanence, the life of the eternal now; it is to live in what all the traditions refer to as the state of the great liberation for with it comes the utter transformation of reality and “*Allāh is the Friend of those who are secure in belief. He brings them from the darkness into the light.*” (2:257)

This world of light is a world of infinite transparent beauty in which all things appear lit from within which in truth they are. For this reason it is said that to the man of baqā' a camel is the same as a beautiful woman.

The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him said, "All beauty is from the beauty of Allāh" (*Kullu jamilūn min jamalu-llāh*) and he said, "Allāh is beautiful. He loves beauty." (*Inna-llāha jamilūn yahibbu-j-jamal*) He also said, "When you see a beautiful woman re-member the houris of the Garden and transport yourself from this world to the next and when you see the houris of the Garden transport your self to Allāh who is absolute Beauty."



The reality of each word is alif, the reality of alif is the point. the reality of the point was, at one time the ink the reality of which was smoke from the grain of the husks of seed burned for that purpose. Now, in this time, the reality of the point is a pixel of light the reality of which is the Light of Allāh as Allāh is the Light of Heavens and Earth. The source of all light and all darkness which is, if clearly seen, the Light of the Dhāt for in darkness is the water of life.

Now dear reader if you keep your sight on the ink the letters dissappear just as if I follow the dots which form each letter down the beams of the electron all that remains is Light.

Dhāt is apparent.

and Allāh alone knows the Truth.



At the end of this brief unfolding, and inadequate explanation, of some of the Stages of the Love of Allāh we wish to clarify certain points concerning life *after* annihilation. In speaking and writing about this subject the question often arises as to whether, after annihilation, the *shari‘āh* is still binding on the one who has ‘returned’ and is dwelling or abiding in a state of permanence (*baqā’*). This question is most often asked by those who have only ‘read about’ Taṣawwuf or those who have been involved in one of the many synthetic or syncretic ‘new-age’ groups or cults who have arrogated to themselves the ‘name’ of Ṣufism or Taṣawwuf without ever haven taken the necessary step of the volitional surrender of self (*ʿislām*) to Allāh in accord with the Book and the Practice (*kitāb wa sunnah*) which is the very first step in the ‘Ṣūfī Path’. Not having taken that step they, in fact, continue to live in accord with the appetites of their own unpurified nafs (selves) or, worse, in accord with the unpurified nafs of a self-styled murshīd, pīr or ṣhaykh who, whilst claiming to be a teacher, has not yet mastered the very first lesson of Taṣawwuf.

It must be made clear without a hint of doubt that, in the first place, it is impossible to tread the Path of Love as a Ṣūfī without having both submitted the self to the Divine Law contained in the Final Revelation and having submitted then sought to emulate to the best of one’s ability the Practices of the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him.

Anything less is sophistry rather than Ṣufism.

No duality exists between the Spirit and the Law except in the minds and hearts of unbelievers (*kafirīn*) who live by covering up (*kufar*) the Truth inwardly from their selves and outwardly by refusal to witness (*shahadatayn*) that Truth in the conduct of their lives in the world.

This is equally so regardless if one is a Taoist or Hindu or Buddhist or Jew or Christian or a practitioner of an aboriginal transmission for “every nation has its Messenger.” (10:47)

The hows, whys and wherefores of all this are outside the parameters of this essay. It is this writer’s personal experience over a lifetime of spiritually motivated travel across the face of the earth that all sincere searchers and seekers everywhere almost invariably reach the point of submission (*islām*) to a verified and attested Divine Message if, unfortunately, sometimes in a vestigial or barely recognizable form.

In spite of those who have claimed the contrary there is no ‘sure Way’ outside the Law. It is lamentable and unfortunate that people caught up in various cults and syncretic movements are unable to clearly understand that neither can tradition be fabricated nor can Divine Revelation arise from human thought or, for that matter, from nature’s will as some adherents of the Gaia cult suggest. Rather the Way emerges out of a Providential Grace from a Single Source, which is both everywhere and nowhere. A Way that carries with it a means of knowing Truth, a Way of attaching oneself to Reality and a integral system which enables one to live in harmony with all under Heaven and that exists upon Earth in accord with Revelation.



Moreover the means, the method and the system must not only have manifested in the form of the Custom and Practice {*sunnah*} of the one who received the original revelation but must be an operative experiential actuality observable and verifiable in living human beings who have arrived at Reality via its means and by self-corroboration through practice.

Thus we affirm, as have all those who have traversed the Way before us, that Divine Law is binding upon both the novice and the master and that there is neither departure (*sulūk*) nor arrival (*wiṣāl*) and certainly no permanence (*baqāʾ*) outside the Book and the Practice (*kitāb wa sunnah*). We are completely conversant with the arguments of the hypocrites (*munaḥfiqīn*) who, culling random snippets from Qurʾān, seek to justify their own spiritual arrogance (*kibriyāʾ*) behind which they hide from the fear of the confrontation of the impure with the Pure which will in any case come, sooner or later.

We also affirm that there are undoubtable differences of degree in both consciousness and depth as in, for example, the ṣalāh of the novice and the ṣalāh of the master, nevertheless the ṣalāh remains equally incumbent upon them both.

Whilst the novice, and the sālik who never *arrives*, may pray out of fear of the Fire and hope for the Garden, the master prays in the state of ascertained love of Allāh and is “eternally in prayer” (‘*alā ṣalātim dāʾimūn*) (70:23) in the secure knowledge (*amana*) that “unto Allāh belongs the East and the West and wherever you turn there is the Presence (*wajh*) of Allāh.” (2:115). Yet does he or she perform their ṣalāh.

There are those who cannot see the connection between the inner and the outer, the concealed and the revealed the *ḍhāhir* and the *bāṭin*. There are those who imagine that we are praying for something and those who know that the prayer, the fast, the alms, the pilgrimage *are* the somethings, the unfailing means and support which is both a Way to something and the something it self for the secret is always hidden in the manifest.

The means and the end are one just as the *bāṭin* and the *ḍhāhir* of my coat, woven from the same threads, are but two sides of a single piece of fabric. Form *is* emptiness and emptiness *is* form. The utility is both in what is there and what is not there.

This may seem paradoxical but it must be remembered that it is precisely paradox which often can bring about that tear in the fabric of time and space which allows for the glimpse of eternity. Allāh ordained that the angels prostrate themselves before ʾĀdam (2:34), Allāh ordained that the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, standing at the uttermost limits of consciousness at the Lote Tree of the Boundary of the Garden of Ultimate Refuge prostrate himself in a certain clearly defined manner and moreover teach his followers to do so. Are we more than angels, greater than prophets that we refuse His Orders whatever they be? There was one in truth who believed himself to be greater than the angels and more than ʾĀdam. A being made of smoke-less fire whose name was ʾIblis who, when ordered to prostrate before ʾĀdam replied, filled with hubris and self pride, "*I am better than he is. You created me of fire and You created him from mud.*" (7:12)

Pride and hubris always stand in opposition to the Love of Allāh and it is this pride which is the sin of 'Iblis, the cursed Shayṭān, who, by the flickering light of his eldritch fire, blinds people to their original form (*'aḥsan taqwīm*). The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him said, that no one with even an atom of pride would ever enter the Garden.

In this context it would be wise to remember an oft-quoted maxim, “The one who has no shaykh (teacher, guide, master) has 'Iblis ash-Shayṭān as their shaykh.” For whilst we can envision the Path of Love as a ladder we can also envision it as the ascent of a treacherous mountain with numerous unstable cliff faces offering scarcely a handhold, yawning crevasses, slippery passes with sheer falls to both left and right, narrow bridges leading from pitch to pitch as well as meadows full of sweet grasses and cool waters where it would be easy and comfortable to linger forever, on vast and sublime vistas which tempt one to gaze upon them for an eternity.

It is no mistake that all the prophets and messengers, peace be upon them, have been human beings and not angels. It is from humans that we all learn, starting with our mothers, and then our fathers, and then from our teachers.

If one seeks the Way to Allāh, it is crucial to find one who knows the Way.

If one needs a medical operation one goes to a qualified surgeon just as makes use of an engineer to determine the various loads and stresses that a structure might undergo in order to withstand an earthquake or severe storm.

Because of the destruction and collapse of the ‘traditional’ world (especially in the West and increasingly in the East) in the face of the secular new world order it is not only hard to find such a person but it almost more difficult to know any more what such a person would be like even if one knew what to look for or where look. From the Ṣūfī perspective we offer the following time tested criteria as an aid to the reader.

1) The Ṣhaykh (or Ṣhaykhah if such be the case) is a Muslim adhering to Qur’ān and Sunnah outwardly and inwardly, in the large and the small — at home, as well as in the world and insofar as the means of earning a living, daily activities, surroundings, concentration, company and concerns. 2) The Ṣhaykh has received *’idhn* (permission) to teach and initiate others in the form of a (preferably) written and signed *ijāzah* (authorization) from his Ṣhaykh who is a known ‘link’ in the chain (*silsilah*) of spiritual transmission. 3) The Ṣhaykh possesses, and is capable of transmitting through teaching and guidance, the perfected means of attaching the seeker {*murīd*} to the Absolute and the most efficacious methods of concentrating on the Reality.

Ṣhaykh Aḥmad az-Zurruq, Allāh sanctify his secret, says that the implicit conditions of the ṣhaykh are: “1) He must have a pure and lucid taste. 2) His outward knowledge must be sound. 3) His aspiration must be strong. 4) His outward state must be pleasing. 5) His insight must be piercing. He says further that anyone who manifests any of the following qualities is not a ṣhaykh: “1) Ignorance of religion (*dīn*). 2) Disregard (or scorn)

for the sanctity of other Muslims. 3) Entering into that which is not his concern. 4) Following his own desires. 5) Lack of shame in regard to bad manners or bad character.”

In his book on the Principles of Šūfism (*qawā'id at-taṣawwuf*) Šhaykh az-Zarrūq says that “The Šūfī's views of dealing with Allāh are more scrupulous (*warī'*) than the jurist (*faqih*) for the *faqih* considers that which makes difficulties disappear while the Šūfī considers that which brings about perfection. The views of the Šūfī are also more exacting than that of the theologian (*'alim*) because the *'alim* examines the orthodoxy of belief while the Šūfī seeks that which straightens certitude (*al-yaqīn*). His view is also more particular than a Qur'ānic commentator {*mufasssir*} and the traditionalist (*muḥaddith*) for the *mufasssir* and the *muḥaddith* examine the rule and the idea whilst the Šūfī goes beyond that to seeks the inner meaning after ascertaining what the *mufasssir* and the *muḥaddith* established. If he does not do such then he is but an esoterist {*bāṭinī*} who has departed from Divine Law (*ash-ṣharī'ah*).”

We ask that Allāh preserve us from any such a departure and to “Guide on the Straight Path, the Path of those whom You have favoured not the path of those who suffer wrath or those who are astray.” {1:5-7}



We end as we began in and by the Name of Allāh, The Mercy Full, the Compassionate, asking for His Peace and Blessings on Sayyīdinā Muḥammad, Seal of the Prophets and all the

Prophets and Messengers and Angels and the Near Ones and that His Contentment be upon the People of the Cloak, the Family of the Noble House and the Rightly Guided Successors and all the Companions and their Followers and their Followers and all those Venerable Masters who have fostered us and our Guides to Allāh the Most High and that peace and abiding goodness shall be with us always and forever more and that we shall have the shade on a day when there will be no shade and we shall meet in Gardens beneath which rivers flow lit by the Light of His Presence full of Majesty and Glory.

We ask Allāh that all those who are broken hearted, who suffer from thwarted dreams and wasted lives may find their way to the love of Allāh which leads from hard times, anguish, depression and anxiety to comfort, joy, relaxation, peace, beauty and love secure in the promise of Allāh that “I am with the one whose heart is broken for my sake.” (*ḥadith qudsī*) and “*His Word is Truth and His is the Kingdom.*” (6:73)

والله أعلم

[and Allāh knows best]

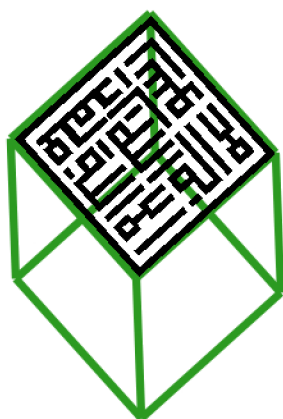
al-Ḥajj ‘Abdullāh Noorudeen Durkee  
who is poor before his Lord and enriched from His Bounty

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